

Charleston in the news: 'Love is stronger than hate'

BY DAVID BROUGHTON

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*"An active shooter, multiple people down."
— Charleston, S.C., 911 dispatch, 9:05 p.m., June 17, 2015*

Lifelong Charleston resident Chris Singleton, then an 18-year-old outfielder at Charleston Southern, had just arrived home from Collins Park, where he had played a game for the under-19 summer league North Charleston Dixie Majors. Someone called him from his mother's phone and told him to come immediately to Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where his mother, Sharonda, was an assistant pastor.

The caller did not give a reason, but the world would soon hear that a young man had opened fire on a prayer group inside the church, killing Sharonda and eight others.

Singleton made international news the next day, when he publicly forgave the killer, repeating the belief that his mother had ingrained in him: "Love is stronger than hate."

His message galvanized the city, and the following year the Charleston RiverDogs presented him with their Humanitarian Award.

Almost exactly two years to the day after the shooting, Singleton was drafted by the **Chicago Cubs**. He never made the major leagues, but two weeks after the club released him in March 2019, he returned home and was named the RiverDogs' community outreach director.

“When Dave [Echols] handed me the Humanitarian Award, he just wrapped his arms around me, and I never forgot that,” he said. “So after I got released from the Cubs, Dave said, ‘We’d love to have you as part of our team.’ And, man, I jumped on that. Now I can serve our Holy City, while being part of baseball.”

Singleton is now on the road 150 days a year speaking about tolerance and forgiveness, and works for the RiverDogs when he is back in town.

“It’s a dream come true,” he said.